SISYPHUS;

OR,

UPON TAKING COUNSEL.

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE.

SOCRATES AND SISYPHUS.

[1.] *Soc.* And[1] we too waited a long time for you yesterday, Sisyphus, at the display made by Stratonicus, in order that you might, together with us, hear a clever man, who both by word and deed exhibited many and beautiful things;[2] and[3] when we thought you would no longer be present, we were by ourselves the hearers of the man.

Sis. [4]Truly by Zeus.[4] For a want of leisure of rather a compulsory kind occurred to me, so that I neglected[5] the display. For our rulers had a consultation yesterday, and they compelled me to consult with them. Now with us Pharsalians[6] it is a law to obey the rulers, should they order any of us to consult with them.

Soc. And honourable it is to obey the law and to be reputed by fellow-citizens to be a good counsellor, as you are

[1] As this dialogue is one of those called Ἀκέφαλοι, "headless," we need not wonder at the appearance of δὲ καὶ, here.

[2] With the mention of πράγματα here, may be compared that of ἔργα, in another Pseudo-Platonic dialogue, called Hipparchus, p. 228, B. ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἔργα σοφίας ἀπεδείξατο.

[3] In lieu of καὶ ἐπεί, one would have expected ἐπεὶ δὲ—

[4—4] Although Ναὶ μὰ are found thus united in Hom. Il. A. 235, Ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκῆπτρον, and elsewhere, yet here the sentence seems rather too abrupt,

[5] I have omitted μὴ after ὥστε, for it is hardly intelligible in this place.

[6] Instead of καὶ, which has no meaning here, the author wrote γε, for γε is thus found after proper names, as I could show by numerous passages. And γε and καὶ are frequently confounded, as I have remarked on Eurip. Tro. 520.

[1] [reputed to be a good counsellor as one of the Pharsalians].[1] But, Sisyphus, although I should not be able to enter upon a discussion against you on the subject of consulting correctly, conceiving it to be a work requiring much leisure, and a lengthy argument, still I would endeavour to converse with you first about consulting in the abstract, what it is. Can you then tell me what it is to consult in the abstract? Do not (tell)[2] me what it is to do so well or ill or in any manner,[3] but what kind of thing it is alone by itself. For you could well and easily tell,[4] being so good a counsellor. But (I fear) lest it is a superfluous work for me to make of you the inquiry.

Sis. Is it then unknown to you what it is to consult?

Soc. It is, Sisyphus, to myself at least, if it be any thing else than for a person, who does not know any thing of those matters respecting which it is requisite to do some act, to speak like a diviner and off-handed, whatever may present itself, and to make a guess [5] according to the same things for himself;[5] like persons playing at odd and even,[6] who, knowing nothing about the even and odd, which they hold in their own [7] hands, nevertheless happen by accident to say what is true about the same [8] things. To consult then is oftentimes a thing

[1]—[1] The words between the brackets are an evident interpolation. As regards the matter compare Hipp. Maj. § 2.

[2] On the ellipse of λέγε after *μή μοι* see myself on Æsch. Suppl. 284.

[3] The Greek is at present *ἢ τὸ καλῶς πως*— It was originally *ἢ τό γ' ἄλλως πως*— For *καλῶς* would be superfluous after the preceding *εὖ*— On *ἄλλως πως* compare Alcibiad. II. § 13, n; Phædr. p. 272, B.; Protag. p. 333, B.; and on *γ' ἄλλως* and *καλῶς*, see Crito, § 13, n. [5].

[4] The Greek is *ἢ καὶ πάνυ ῥᾳδίως αὐτὸς*— But the sense requires, as I have translated, *εὖ γὰρ καὶ πάνυ ῥᾳδίως εἴποις ἂν οὕτως γ'*— Compare Euthyph. p. 14, A. *ῥᾳδίως ἂν εἴποις*. Hipp. Maj. § 15, *καὶ σμικρὸν τί που τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη μάθημα, ὧν σύγ' οὕτως πολλῶν ἐπίστασαι*. With regard to *εὖ καὶ ῥᾳδίως*, see Schæfer on Bos. v. *Κίνδυνος*.

[5]—[5] Such is the literal version of the Greek, *καὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ αὐτῷ*— out of which I am unable to make a particle of sense. I could have understood *εἰκάζοντα κατὰ πάντα εὖ πως*, "making a guess on all points somehow successfully," as I suggested twenty years ago.

[6] On this game see the commentators on Lysid. p. 206, F., Aristoph. Plut. 817, and Horace's "Ludere par impar."

[7] This *αὐτῶν* is very strange here, as if the party playing did not know the number in his own hand. Common sense evidently leads to *τῶν ἐναντίων*, "the opposite party," in lieu of *τῶν αὐτῶν*— and to *ἐνῶσιν* in lieu of *ἔχωσιν*—

[8] Here again I am at a loss in *περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν*. For the sense leads at once to *περὶ πάντων*—

of this kind, that a person, although knowing nothing of the matters, about which he is consulting, yet happens by accident to say what is the truth. If then it is a thing of this kind, I know what to consult is; if however it is not a thing of this kind, I should not know it at all.

Sis. It is not of such a kind as not to know in reality any thing at all, but to know partly something of the matter in hand, and partly not to know at all.[1]

[2.] *Soc.* Do you mean that to consult is, by Zeus, a thing of this kind; that, as I seem to myself to divine somewhat your notions relating to the act of consulting well, it is the seeking to discover the best things for a person to employ himself in for his own benefit, but not to know them clearly, [2]but for this to be, as it were, in some form of a thought?[2] Do you not mean somehow in this way.

Sis. I do.

Soc. Whether do men seek such things as they know, or such as they do not know?

Sis. Both.

Soc. Do you mean by this something of this kind, that men seek both what they know and what they do not know? just as if a person should know Callistratus, who he is;[3] but not know to find where he is, [4]not who is Callistratus.[4] Do you mean that to seek both is after this manner.

Sis. I do.

Soc. He then, who knows Callistratus, would not seek that matter, namely, to know him.

Sis. He would not.

Soc. But he would, where he might be.

Sis. It seems so to myself at least.

Soc. Nor would he seek even this, namely, where it was possible to find him, if he knew already; but he would find him forthwith.

[1] On account of the antithesis in *εἰδέναι τι*, I have translated as if the Greek were *μηδὲ πᾶν*, not *μηδέ πω*— Compare Xenoph. M. S. iv. 6, 7, Ἆρ' οὖν δοκεῖ σοι ἀνθρώπῳ δυνατὸν εἶναι τὰ ὄντα πάντα ἐπίστασθαι; Οὐδὲ μὰ Δί' ἔμοιγε πολλοστὸν μέρος αὐτῶν. Of course I am aware that *μηδέπω ἐπίστασθαι* is found just afterwards, but there is not, as here, any antithesis.

[2—2] Such seems to be the meaning of the words, *ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐν νοήσει τινι εἶναι τοῦτο—*

[3] In the formula Καλλίστρατον γιγνώσκοι ὅς τις ἐστι, the noun is not elsewhere, if I rightly remember, repeated. I have therefore omitted it.

[4—4] The words between the numerals, I confess, I cannot understand.

Sis. Yes.

Soc. Men then do not seek the things, which they know, but, as it seems, what they do not know. But if this reasoning appears to you to be of a captious kind, and to have been spoken, not for the sake of a practical purpose, but for conversation merely, consider the matter in this way, if the case seems to be such as has been just now stated. Do you not know that this takes place in geometry? that by geometricians the diameter is not unknown, whether it be a diameter or not, —for this I well know[1] is not sought to be discovered by them, —but how great it is in measurement in proportion to the sides of the space which it intersects? Is not this the very thing which is sought respecting it?

Sis. So it seems at least to me.

Soc. For it is that, which is unknown. Is it not so?

Sis. Certainly.

Soc. Know you not that the doubling of the cube is sought to be discovered by geometricians, how great it is by calculation? But the cube itself is not sought for by them, whether it is a cube, or not; for that at least they know well.[2] Is it not so?

Sis. Yes.

Soc. Respecting the air likewise, do you not know that Anaxagoras and Empedocles, and the rest of those, [3] who talk about meteorology,[3] are all seeking whether it is boundless or has a limit?

Sis. Yes I do.

Soc. But not the question, whether it is air. Is it not so?

Sis. It is.[4]

[3.] *Soc.* Will you then agree with me that such is the case with all other things[5] now[6] that to no person is there

[1] Although *οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ* is not an uncommon expression, yet here I should prefer—*οὐδὲ γὰρ, οἶδ' εὖ,* and so I have translated; for the second *οὐδὲ* is omitted in some MSS.

[2] The Greek is *τοῦτό γε.* It was, I think, *τοῦτό γ' εὖ*—

[3—3] The word in Lucian's Icaromenipp. § 5, is *Μετεωρολέσχης*; in Aristophanes *Νεφ.* 359, *Μετεωροσοφιστῶν*; and in 332, *μετεωροφένακας.*

[4] After *ἦ γάρ,* the answer generally expresses an assertion, not a negation; which however is found again towards the end of this §, n. [4].

[5] The Greek is *καὶ κατὰ τῶν ἄλλων*—which I cannot understand. I have translated as if it were originally *καὶ τὰ τῶν*—

[6] Instead of *ἤδη* one MS. has *ἃ δή,* which leads to *καὶ δεῖ*—

any seeking[1] after the things he knows, but rather after those which he does not know?

Sis. I will.

Soc. Did not the consulting appear to us to be this very thing, namely, that a person is seeking after the best things relating to what he would require to employ himself in for his own benefit.

Sis. Yes.

Soc. And the seeking was, like the consulting, about things to be done. Is it not so?

Sis. Entirely.

Soc. Must we not consider then at present, what impediment is in the way of those, who are seeking, to the discovery of the things, about which they are making the search?

Sis. So it seems at least to me.

Soc. Could we say that any thing else was an impediment to them except a want of knowledge?

(*Sis.* Nothing else).[2]

Soc. Let us, by Zeus, consider the matter very much, letting out,[3] as the saying is, every rope, and sending out every voice.[4] And view thou this point with me. Think you that a man could consult about music, who knows nothing of music; or how he ought to play on the guitar, or to perform any thing according to the musician's art?

Sis. Not I indeed.

Soc. What then, as regards generalship, or piloting? Do you think that the person, who knows neither of those arts,

[1] The syntax requires instead of *ζητεῖν*, either *ζήτημα* or *τὸ ζητεῖν*.

[2] I have introduced, what the sense requires, *Οὐκ ἄλλο*. Bekker indeed assigns *Σκοπῶμεν νὴ Δία* to Sisyphus, on the authority of four MSS. But such an answer could never be given to the question, *Ἆρ' οὖν ἄλλο τι φαίημεν ἄν—*

[3] In lieu of *ἐφέντες*, Bekker would read *ἀφιέντες*— But we meet in Protagor. p. 338, A., with *ἐφεῖναι καὶ χαλάσαι τὰς ἡνίας τοῖς λόγοις*: although a little afterwards one MS. reads *οὐρίᾳ ἀφέντα*; where the rest have *ἐφέντα*. Winckelmann prefers *ἐξιέντες*, similar to *ἐξιᾶσι πάντα δὴ κάλων*, in Eurip. Med. 278, and *πάντα δὴ κάλων ἐξιέναι*, in Aristoph. *Ἱππ.* 753, to which he might have added *ἐξιεὶς κάλως* in Tro. 94, and Herc. F. 837. But the play in the words requires here, *κάλων ἐφιέντες* and *φωνὴν ἀφιέντες*— where the latter expression is similar to *φωνὴν ἀφῆκεν*, in Phœn. 1449, and *φθογγὴν ἀφῇ* in Hippol. 418.

[4] On the formula *πᾶσαν φωνὴν ἱέναι* see Heindorf on Euthyd. p. 293, A.

would have it in his power to consult about either of those matters, [1]as to what is to be done by him, and how,[1] who knows not to act the general or pilot?

Sis. I do not.

Soc. Do you think then that the case is so respecting all other matters, of which a person knows nothing; that it is not possible for him even to consult,[2] who knows nothing about them?

Sis. I do.

Soc. But it is (possible) for him to seek (to know).[3] Is it not?

Sis. Certainly.

Soc. To seek then would not be the same as to consult.

Sis. How could it?

Soc. Because to seek is surely applied to the matters, which a person does not know; but it seems to be not possible for a person to consult about those matters, of which he is ignorant. Or has not this been said correctly?[4]

Sis. Very much so.

Soc. Ye were then yesterday seeking to discover what was best for the state; but ye did not know it. For if ye had known, ye would not surely have been seeking it, just as we do not seek any thing amongst those which we know. Is it not so?

Sis. It is.[5]

Soc. Whether does it seem to you, Sisyphus, if a person does not know, that he ought to seek or to learn?

Sis. To myself at least it seems, by Zeus, to learn.

Soc. And correctly does it seem so. But does it seem to you that he ought to learn rather than seek on this account, because a person would discover more quickly and easily, if

[1]—[1] The Greek is ὅ, *τι ποιητέον εἴη αὐτῷ ὅπως* [*ἢ στρατηγητέον ἢ κυβερνητέον ἐκείνῳ αὐτῷ*], where the words between the brackets are evidently an interpolation of *ποιητέον*, as I remarked twenty years ago; when I likewise suggested ὅ, *τι ἢ ὅπως*— similar to ὅ, *τι καὶ ὅπη* in Sympos. p. 212, B.

[2, 3] The Greek is *μὴ εἰδέναι μηδὲ βουλεύεσθαί πω δυνατὸν*— where *μὴ εἰδέναι* is at variance with the train of thought; for the question is about the being able to consult, not about the being able to know. Hence I have omitted *μὴ εἰδέναι* here, and, after changing those words into *ἦν εἰδέναι*, inserted them in (3), for there *ζητεῖν* could hardly stand by itself.

[4] I have translated, as if *εὖ* had dropt out after *ἐλέχθη*.

[5] Here, as in (2), the negative assertion is an answer to *ἢ γάρ*.

he learnt from those, who know, than if he were to seek himself what he did not know? Or is it on some other account?

Sis. [1] On no other than this.[1]

[4.] Why did ye not then yesterday, disregarding the act of consulting about matters, of which ye knew nothing, and of seeking to do the best for the state,[2] learn from some one of those, who did know, how ye might do the best for the state? But ye seem to me to have been sitting the whole of yesterday and speaking off-hand, and prophesying about matters, of which ye were ignorant, and neglecting to learn, both the rulers of the state and you together with them. But perhaps you will say that this has been played off by myself against you for the sake of a conversation merely, and it has not been proved to you seriously. Consider then, by Zeus, this question at least for the present with seriousness. If it were conceded that to consult is something, and not, as now discovered, to be [3]nothing else than a knowledge according to conjecture, and a speaking off-hand,[3] making use of merely a more solemn name,[4] but nothing else,[5] do you think, that as regards the act of consulting well and being good counsellors, persons differ one from another on that point,[6] as persons [7][differ one from another][7] on all the other kinds of knowledge,

[1]—[1] I have translated, as if the Greek were, *Οὐκ ἄλλ' ἢ διὰ τοῦτο*, not *Οὔκ ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο*, although a similar impropriety is found in another Pseudo-Platonic dialogue, Hipparch. p. 227, B. *ἢ ἄλλο τι; Οὔκ· ἀλλὰ—*

[2] I have translated, as if the Greek were *τῇ πόλει*, not *ἐν τῇ πόλει*, where the preposition is superfluous, as shown by the very next sentence.

[3]—[3] The Greek is *οὐδὲν—ἀλλοῖον ἢ ὅπερ ἐπιστήμη τε καὶ εἰκασία καὶ σχεδιασμὸς*, literally "nothing strange than what is knowledge and guessing, and speaking off-hand." But the idea of any thing strange is here quite out of place; while this union of knowledge and guessing would be a manifest absurdity. I have therefore translated, as if the Greek were, what I formerly suggested, *οὐδὲν ἄλλο ὂν ἢ ὅπερ ἐπιστήμη γε κατ' εἰκασίαν καὶ σχεδιασμόν.*

[4] Compare Lucian in Icaro-Menipp. § 29, *ὄνομα σεμνὸν τὴν ἀρετὴν περιθέμενοι*; and see Valckenaer in Eurip. Diatrib. p. 258, who might have quoted Eustath. Il. i. p. 762, 62, Bas. *σεμνότητος περιπετάσματι τὸ τοῦ πράγματος δυσπρόσωπον συγκαλύπτεται*: and have corrected *παραπετάσματι* by the aid of *ταῖς τέχναις ταύταις παραπετάσμασιν ἐχρήσαντο*, in Protagor. p. 317.

[5] I confess I can scarcely understand *ἄλλῳ δ' οὐδενί*— The sense evidently requires *ἀληθεῖ δ' οὐδαμῇ*— "but true not at all."

[6] In lieu of *αὐτῷ* the sense and syntax require *ἐν αὐτῷ*, similar to *ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις ἐπιστήμαις*, just afterwards.

[7]—[7] The words between the numerals are a manifest interpolation.

(such as) carpenters from carpenters, physicians from physicians, and hautboy-players from hautboy-players, and all the rest of handicraftsmen differ from each other?[1] As then those engaged in these arts (differ),[2] think you that in the act of consulting persons would differ at all in this manner, one from another?

Sis. Yes I do.

Soc. Now tell me, do not all, both those who consult well, and those who do so ill, consult about matters that are about to be?

Sis. Certainly.

Soc. [3]Is the future any thing else than what is not as yet?[3]

Sis. It is not.

Soc. For if it were, it would not surely be still about to be, but it would be already. Is it not so?

Sis. Yes.

Soc. [4]Therefore that, which is not yet, in reality has not been produced.[4]

Sis. It has not.

Soc. [5]Therefore that, which is not and has not been produced, has no existence in reality.[5]

Sis. It has not.

[5.] *Soc.* Do not all, then, who consult well or ill, consult about things which neither are, nor have been, and which have no existence, when they consult respecting things about to be?

Sis. At least they seem so.

Soc. Does it seem to you possible for a person to hit well or ill a thing, that does not exist?

[1] I have translated, as if the Greek were *αὐτοὶ ἑαυτῶν*, not *αὐτοί τε αὐτῶν*, where *ἑαυτῶν* is *ἀλλήλων*, as elsewhere.

[2] I have neglected the unintelligible *ἢ* found between *τέχναις* and *οὔπω*—

[3—3] The Greek is *ἄλλο τι οὖν ἢ τὰ μέλλοντα οὔπω ἐστίν.* But the sense requires, as I remarked long ago, *ἄλλο τι οὖν τὰ μέλλοντα ἢ ἃ οὔπω ἐστίν*, and so I have translated.

[4—4] The Greek is *οὐκοῦν εἰ μή πω ἐστὶν οὕτως οὐδὲ γέγονε τὰ μὴ ὄντα*— literally, "Therefore if it is not yet thus, that which is not has not been ever," which I must leave for others, if they can, to understand. The train of thought requires, *οὐκοῦν, ἃ μή πω ἔστιν, ὄντως οὐδὲ γέγονε.*

[5—5] Here again the chain of reasoning leads to *οὐκοῦν, ἃ μή πω ἔστι μηδὲ γέγονεν, οὔπω οὐδὲ φύσιν ἔχει οὐδεμίαν ὄντως*, as I have translated, not *οὐκοῦν εἰ μήπω μηδὲ γέγονεν—αὐτῶν*— where *αὐτῶν* has nothing to which it can be referred.

Sis. How say you this?

Soc. I will explain, what I mean to say. Consider then. How would you distinguish out of many archers, which of them was the good and (which) the bad?

[1] *Sis.* Surely this is not difficult to know.[1]

Soc. For perhaps you would bid them shoot at some mark. Is it not so?

Sis. Certainly.

Soc. Would you not decide that he is the conqueror, who hits most often the mark in a direct way.[2]

Sis. Yes, I would.

Soc. But [3]if there were no mark laid down[3] for them to shoot at, but each shot where he[4] liked, how could you distinguish between the good and bad archer?

Sis. Not at all.

Soc. Would you then not be at a loss to distinguish between

[1]—[1] I have attributed all between the numerals to Sisyphus, not, as commonly, to Socrates; and altered ἦ into ἦν—

[2] I scarcely understand κατ' ὀρθὸν— The sense evidently requires something like "in the bull's eye," which is in the centre of a target, and would be exprssed probably in Greek by κατ' ὀμφαλὸν—

[3]—[3] Here is evidently an allusion to an Æsopo-Socratic fable, first published in a latent metrical form by De Furia, from a Vatican MS., but recently in a more complete state from an Athos MS. by Boissonade; who however did not perceive some errors in the Greek, which I corrected in Revue de Philologie, vol. ii. p. 225, and I will therefore present the reader with an English version of it.

> "To the gods Apollo, his long arrows holding,
> Spoke thus—Who knows the arrow to let fly,
> Than the far-darting farther? On the strife
> With Phœbus enter'd Zeus, his weapons handling.
> In Ares' helmet Hermes shook the lots,
> Which Phœbus first obtaining, with his hands
> The bent bow pushing from him, and the string
> Letting go sharply, first his arrow fix'd
> Within the distant gardens of the West.
> When with his stride did Zeus the distance clear,
> And cried—Where shall I shoot? no space have I.
> And no bow drawing, bow-man's glory gained."

To the same fable an allusion is made by Lucretius in i. 968, "si quis procurrat ad oras Ultimus extremas jaciatque volatile telum," quoted by Davies on Cicero de N. D. i. 20, "animus—ita late longeque peregrinatur, ut nullam tamen oram ultimam videat, in qua possit insistere."

[4] Common sense requires "where," not "how," in Greek ὅπου, not ὅπως, and so I have translated.

those consulting well or ill, if they did not know what they were consulting about?

Sis. Yes, I should.

Soc. Do not those then, who consult respecting things about to be, consult respecting things not in existence?

Sis. Certainly.

Soc. It is not therefore possible for any person to hit the thing not in existence. For how does any one seem to you to be able to hit, what is not in existence?

Sis. Not at all.

Soc. Since then it is not possible to hit, what is not in existence, no one would be able to hit any thing[1] of those not in existence by consulting. For things that are about to be belong to those not in existence. Is it not so?

Sis. So it seems at least to me.

Soc. He then, who does not hit things about to be, would be amongst men neither a good counsellor, nor a bad counsellor.

Sis. It seems he would not.

Soc. Nor is a person (said)[2] to be either a better counsellor, or a worse counsellor, not even if he should be more successful or less successful in hitting, what is not in existence.

Sis. He is not.

Soc. Looking then to what circumstance men call certain persons by the name[3] of good counsellors, or bad counsellors, is it not worthy, Sisyphus, to think again upon this matter?

Sis. (I say so).[4]

[1] I have translated as if the Greek were *ἄν γέ τι*, not *ἂν ἔπ—*

[2] As there is nothing on which *εἶναι* can depend, I suspect the author wrote *Οὐδὲ λέγεται*, not *Οὐδέ γε*—as I have translated.

[3] To avoid the strange expression *ἀποκαλοῦσιν—εἶναι*, I have translated, as if the Greek were *ἀποκαλοῦσιν—ὀνόματι—*

[4] The dialogue is generally thought to be imperfect; but it will be complete, if we suppose that *φημί* has dropt out after *Σίσυφε*—and so I have translated.